

# Water Testing Frequently Asked Questions

Salem-Keizer Public Schools is testing water for contaminants at all schools this summer. These FAQs address some common questions that parents, students and teachers may have about safety and testing.

## Questions From Parents

**Question:** The water from some fixtures in my child's school tested high for lead or copper. Should my child go to the doctor?

**Answer:** School district officials have consulted with local health authorities regarding student safety concerns related to drinking water in our schools. The Marion County Health Department recommends that parents with concerns about their children's health contact their healthcare provider.

**Q:** What are the "A" and "B" test samples of drinking fountain and sink water in schools?

**A:** In reports on water testing at schools on the Salem-Keizer district website at <http://www.salemkeizer.org/parents/water-testing-information> "A" and "B" samples are listed. The "A" sample is the first water sample drawn, which includes water that has been sitting in the fixture. The "B" sample is drawn next and includes water that has been sitting in the pipe leading to the fixture. We analyze the "A" samples for all fixtures; but only analyze the "B" sample on fixtures where the "A" sample results were over the action level. See the reports for your school on the district website at the link above for details on action levels.

**Q:** What is the significance of the "B" sample results?

**A:** All fixtures with "A" sample results above the action level will remain out of service until replaced, regardless of the "B" sample results. The "B" sample simply helps determine the source of the metal in the water (fixture vs. supply pipe) to help with planning our repairs.

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**Q:** What are “C” and “D” samples?

**A:** C & D samples were collected after remediation (usually fixture replacement) work has been done at sample sites that were above the SKPS action levels in the initial A samples. We are only having the C sample analyzed initially and will only have the D sample analyzed if necessary based on the A, B and C results.

**Q:** Is my child’s school going to close?

**A:** No schools will be closed due to the repair of water fixtures. Fixtures at schools that test high for lead or copper are immediately taken out of service and repairs proceed while schools are in session.

**Q:** Were all fixtures tested?

**A:** No. Following EPA guidelines, we only tested fixtures that are regular sources of water for drinking and cooking. So this would exclude bathroom fixtures, science class lab sinks, exterior hose bibs and other outlets not designed for obtaining water for human consumption.

**Q:** How will the things get fixed?

**A:** Fixtures that tested high for lead or copper are immediately turned off and clearly labeled and have bags placed over them. After new fixtures are installed, the new fixtures will be tested to ensure they meet drinking water standards.

**Q:** Were hose bibs located outdoors and used for things like watering school gardens, for sports teams and concession stands, tested?

**A:** No. The district did not test any outdoor hose bibs, nor did we test any school garden soil or produce. However, we are considering whether to test outdoor hose bibs that could be regularly used for irrigating vegetable gardens or drinking. In the meantime, we are encouraged by this memo from the Oregon Health Authority, which says that garden vegetables are not a significant source of lead, even when grown in contaminated soils.

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Based on this advice, Portland Public Schools has decided to allow continued consumption of their school garden produce. We have not restricted the consumption of vegetables grown in our school gardens.

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/HealthyNeighborhoods/HealthyGardening/Documents/oha-gardening-technical-memo.pdf>

**Q:** How long will it take to fix things?

**A:** Our goal is to replace and test new fixtures as soon as possible.

**Q:** How can I learn more about the water at my child's school?

**A:** Information about water testing at schools is listed on the Water Testing Information page on the Salem-Keizer Public Schools website at

<http://www.salemkeizer.org/parents/water-testing-information>. This page is being updated regularly with all the latest information on water testing, and includes links to other resources. The full reports on testing at each school is available on the webpage.